

EXETER SCHOOL

11+ and 12+

**English Entrance Examination:
Guidance for Parents and
Candidates**



Guidance for the examination

The 11+ and 12+ Entrance Examinations in English are designed to give us a good sense of a candidate's ability in two key areas, as follows:

- How able is the candidate in reading texts in English?
- How able is the candidate in accurately communicating his/her message in written English?

The Entrance Examinations do **not** test content. For example, we will not ask candidates to identify specific grammatical features (such as nouns) or specific literary features (such as similes or metaphors). We want our Entrance Examinations to give applicants an opportunity to succeed.

The examination itself lasts for one hour and 5 minutes. Some key points are as follows:

- Candidates will be provided with a single examination paper which contains the reading passage and all the questions and tasks;
- Candidates write their answers in the spaces provided in the examination paper;
- The space allocated for each question in the examination paper gives an indication of how much pupils should write;
- The number of marks allocated to each question also gives an indication as to how much candidates should write. As a general rule, one mark represents one point;
- Candidates should answer all the questions.

There are two sections to the Entrance Examination.

The first section is **Section A - Reading Comprehension:**

- Candidates should spend **35 minutes** on this section;
- Candidates will be asked to read a short reading passage (normally from a novel and around 500 words in length) and answer questions on the passage. Some of the questions may be multiple choice questions. In questions which are not multiple choice, candidates should answer in full sentences.

The second section is **Section B - Writing**:

- Candidates should spend **30 minutes** on this section and aim to write the equivalent to about one side of A4 paper;
- It is important that candidates spend time planning their answer. Space will be provided in the examination paper for this;
- Candidates will be asked to write a whole text such as a descriptive piece or a story.

What are we assessing?

The first area we assess is **reading comprehension**. Here, we assess the candidate's ability to:

- **Read for gist** i.e. to understand the general meaning or atmosphere of a passage;
- **Demonstrate understanding of explicit meanings** by selecting specific details from the passage in response to a question;
- **Demonstrate understanding of implicit meanings and attitudes**. Here, candidates are asked to explore the meanings that lie behind specific words or phrases in the reading passage;
- **Paraphrase** i.e. say what is happening in a passage in their own words;
- **Guess the meaning of words from the context in which they appear**. The entrance examination is not a vocabulary test. The skill here is in looking at the relevant word's location within the sentence and paragraph and using that to deduce what the word means;
- **Locate short quotations (words/phrases) in support of ideas** which candidates have about the meaning of the passage.

The second area we will assess is **ability in writing**. In this section, we assess the candidate's ability to:

- **Articulate and express what is thought, felt or imagined**;
- **Sequence facts, ideas and opinions**;
- **Use a range of appropriate vocabulary**. We do look for secure spelling of common words but not necessarily for secure spelling of more adventurous or uncommon words. Candidates should make every effort to spell correctly but should not be deterred from using more adventurous words for fear of misspelling them;

- **Write accurately.** We do not award or withhold marks based on hand-writing although hand-writing that obscures communication is self-penalising.

What will the questions look like?

The questions direct the candidate to specific parts of the reading passage by giving line numbers. The candidate can locate the relevant part of the reading passage by using the line number references printed in the margin of the reading passage. An example of a question follows below:

What does the girl see in line 23 of the passage?

It is important that the candidate answers the question in relation to the correct part of the passage or marks cannot be awarded.

The format of most questions will be self-explanatory. Sometimes, we may include multiple choice questions. To answer these, candidates should underline the response that they think is the best response. A question of this type is reproduced below:

3. What do you think the words from the passage below mean? The words have been printed **in bold** in the passage.

For each of the words, **underline** the response you think is correct.

(a): 'marched'

- Strolled
- Walked in a military way
- Retreated fast
- Felt thirsty

For the written section, we may provide a picture as a way of stimulating the candidate's imagination. The candidate can use the picture as a stimulus if they want to but should not feel obliged to. In addition, the candidate should feel no obligation to rely faithfully on the picture and can include details or ideas of his/her own provided he/she is answering the question.